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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the current status of African-American leadership in early childhood education, explore the reasons for underrepresentation, and identify strategies to increase African-American participation as leaders in the field. Through a literature review, existing survey data, and personal interviews, it was found that a lack of college degrees and financial resources for higher education prevent a substantial proportion of African Americans from advancing from assistant teacher to teacher or director and beyond. Also, subtle forms of racism interfere with the career development of African Americans, including the careers of those who have earned advanced degrees and become early childhood leaders. The NBCDI recommends that: (1) more data be collected on all leaders in early childhood education; (2) there be increased opportunities for personnel already in the field; and (3) a consortium of teacher training institutions that specialize in early childhood education be established to better coordinate existing efforts and develop new strategies for diversifying the field at the leadership level. (MDM)

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PATHS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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PATHS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

September 1993

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Executive Summary

Racially diverse leadership in all facets of the education arena is essential if educational equity is to be assured. Reversing the current low levels of educational achievement for many African American children and youth of other ethnic and racial backgrounds will require sophisticated, informed and diverse educational leadership. This report documents a study undertaken by the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) as a step towards ensuring that such leadership will be achieved.

For a six-month period during 1993, NBCDI conducted a preliminary study to assess the current status of African American leadership in early childhood education, explore the reasons for under-representation, and identify strategies to increase African American participation as leaders in the field. For the purposes of this study, leaders were defined as faculty members of major colleges or universities; researchers or foundation officers; members of advisory boards, commissions, or panels; directors of child care centers or resource and referral agencies; directors of licensing agencies; presenters at major conferences; and individuals who have published articles on early childhood education.

Sources of information were the professional literature, existing survey data, and interviews with 25 African American leaders in the early childhood education field. The Institute's ***major findings*** are as follows:

- The ***literature review*** revealed high participation rates of African American children in early childhood programs as well as a long-standing commitment of the African American community to the early childhood profession. African Americans have had a historical involvement in developing and implementing such programs, and they continue to be well-represented as family day care providers, teachers at child care centers and aides.

- Existing ***survey data*** provided little insight into the difference between the career paths of White and Black leaders in the field. However, these data did provide descriptions of potential leaders: 1) the two groups had proportional levels of employment when compared to the populations of African American and White children enrolled in programs; 2) African Americans had more years of experience; 3) Whites had higher levels of formal education; 4) African Americans had lower mobility than Whites because fewer African Americans had a college degree; and 5) both groups had equally low salaries and poor benefits.

- ***Interviews*** supported the hypothesis that lower educational achievement plays a major role in career advancement for African Americans. Almost all interviewees credited post-graduate education and training with helping them attain leadership positions; however, financial assistance was critical to their attaining degrees, and many described the difficulty of combining work and school. African American leaders also credited families, mentors, self-promotion, and professional organizations with influencing their ability to enter and advance in the field. Nevertheless, almost all of the respondents reported experiencing subtle forms of racism within the field.

Based on these findings, NBCDI's ***primary conclusions*** are that African American early childhood educators seeking to become leaders in the profession face two major barriers:

- A lack of college degrees and financial resources for higher education prevent a substantial proportion of African Americans from advancing from assistant teacher to teacher to teacher/director and beyond.

- Subtle forms of racism interfere with the career development of African Americans, including those who have earned advanced degrees and become early childhood leaders.

NBCDI presents the following ***recommendations*** to increase the numbers of African Americans prepared for leadership positions in early childhood education:

1. Collect additional data on all leaders in early childhood education.

2. Increase educational opportunities for personnel already in the field.

3. Establish a consortium of teacher training institutions that specialize in early childhood education to better coordinate existing efforts and develop new strategies for diversifying the field at the leadership level. ■

Introduction to the Study

With a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and research assistance from the Urban Institute, the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) conducted a six-month study to identify the factors affecting African Americans' ascent to leadership positions in the early childhood profession.

Rationale

Based on more than two decades of experience in this field, NBCDI is aware that African Americans are under-represented as early childhood education leaders. Diversity among leadership in all components of the education arena is essential to ensuring educational equity for all children. However, diverse leadership in early childhood education may be particularly important in reversing the current low levels of educational achievement for many African American children and children from other ethnic minorities in this country, because this is where children first enter the system. The challenges facing this nation's educational system demand a sophisticated, informed and diverse leadership which actively seeks to include all individuals who can contribute to the field.

The inclusion and advancement of African American professionals in early childhood education is important for three reasons:

- **African American professionals are in a unique position to build bridges between the early childhood education community and the African American community.** Through our programs, NBCDI has found that African American parents are eager to become more involved in the education of their children — provided that they have the necessary support from culturally appropriate organizations. African American early childhood education leaders are in a unique position to identify, develop and assess practical approaches to ensuring that African American parents are able to effectively participate in their children's education. Furthermore, the presence of African American leaders in the profession encourages parents to see early childhood education programs as an extension of their community rather than a detached institution.

- **It is essential that aspiring early childhood educators of all races see African Americans and other minorities in leadership positions in the field.** Individuals of all ages are often influenced by role models in their field of interest. African American youth and individuals who are already studying early childhood education or working as aides or assistants in early childhood programs might be encouraged to set higher career goals if there were more African Americans in visible leadership positions. Substantial progress in the elimination of racism within the field might also be achieved if students and educators of all races were able to gain a respect for each other based on increased personal interactions.

- **Diversity in early childhood education leadership allows different perspectives to be heard and considered when policy decisions are made.** Diversity is important for integrating different perspectives into the curriculum and sensitizing administrators and teachers alike to the particular concerns, values and learning styles of a broader cross-section of American children and families. The development of more African American leaders may help improve within the field the understanding of children from a variety of backgrounds. Data concerning the barriers to equitable African American participation at the leadership level are needed to enable the early childhood education community to begin the process of embracing fully the entire talent pool available to improve the quality of education received by America's young children.

Definition of Leadership in Early Childhood Education

For the purposes of this study, NBCDI defined leaders in the early childhood education arena as:

- Directors of child care centers, resource and referral agencies, and licensing agencies;

- Faculty members of major colleges or universities, researchers, and foundation officers addressing early childhood education issues;

- Members of early childhood education commissions, panels, advisory committees, and boards created by government bodies, foundations and other institutions at the national, state, and local levels;

- Presenters at the conferences of such organizations as NBCDI, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Head Start Association, the National Family Day Care Association, and the Child Care Action Campaign; and

- Individuals who have published articles in early childhood education periodicals or served as a resource for local media regarding issues relating to early childhood education.

All of these individuals play major roles in developing and implementing policy within the profession. Their decisions ultimately affect the quality of services delivered to children throughout this nation.

Research Questions

NBCDI sought to uncover the underlying causes of the disparity in numbers of African American and White early childhood education leaders by answering the following questions:

- Are there differences in the characteristics, educational background, and work experiences of African Americans and Whites in early childhood education?

- Is there an identifiable career ladder in the field? If so, are African Americans given the same opportunity as Whites to climb to its highest rung, or do they encounter a "glass ceiling" along the way?

- Do African Americans receive the support, guidance, and information necessary to achieve a leadership role? Do they have access to professional networks?

The answers to these questions can provide a basis for making changes in policy and practice to ensure the inclusion of African Americans at the leadership level. This data may also point to strategies for improving the career progression of early childhood educators of all races.

Objectives and Methodology

NBCDI collaborated with the Urban Institute to collect and analyze data which would provide insight into differences and similarities in the background and experiences of African Americans and Whites in the field. In conducting this investigation, three types of information sources were tapped: the research literature, survey data, and individual interviews.

A review of the literature revealed extensive background material on developments in early childhood education and early childhood programs over the past decade, the entry requirements of the early childhood profession and the characteristics and traits of leaders and African American managers.

Existing survey data begin to describe the pool of potential leaders. However, data are not available on the broad range of careers in early childhood education. Most research has focused on workers in child care centers, and limited data exist bearing on the education, experience, employment, and participation levels of African Americans in the early childhood education field, particularly at the leadership level.

NBCDI conducted interviews with members of its National Child Care/Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee and other selected African American early childhood education professionals in leadership positions.[1] The 25 individuals who were interviewed illuminated the factors and influences that contribute to the advancement of African American leaders in the early childhood education field. Although the number of individuals interviewed is too small for responses to be considered conclusive, the interviews suggest common themes and shared experiences.

This report 1) presents an introduction to the profession of early childhood education — including a historical sketch of African American involvement; 2) discusses the characteristics of potential early childhood educators working in child care centers; and 3) describes the factors identified by current African American leaders as important to their advancement. NBCDI also suggests strategies to increase African American participation in the early childhood education field at the leadership level. ■

[1]While NBCDI would have liked to have interviewed a comparable sample of White leaders, it did not have the resources to do so. This limits the generalizability of this study and is a recommendation for any future work.

Early Childhood Education: A Review of the Literature

In rapidly increasing numbers, young children in the United States are participating in out-of-home early childhood programs. From 1975 to 1990, the number of children enrolled full-time in center-based early education and child care programs grew four-fold from 900,000 to 3.8 million (Kisker et al. 1991). This growth is largely due to the increased proportion of mothers with preschool children working outside the home -- a figure that doubled from 30 to 60 percent between 1970 and 1991 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

In recent years, parents have also developed a heightened interest in utilizing early childhood programs to prepare their children for school. Nearly two out of three four-year-olds were enrolled in an early childhood program in 1990, regardless of their mother's employment status (Hofferth et al. 1991).

Even more so than other preschoolers, Black children participate in early childhood education programs at high rates. Although African Americans comprised 15 percent of children under age five in 1990, they comprised 38 percent of Head Start children (National Head Start Association 1990), 19 percent of children in all center-based programs (Kisker et al., 1991), and 11 percent in home-based programs (Kisker et al. 1991).

Black children are more likely than White children to be enrolled in early childhood programs for at least two reasons. First, married Black mothers are more likely than their White counterparts to be employed. In 1991, 73 percent of Black mothers were in the labor force, compared with 59 percent of White mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

Second, Black children are much more likely than White children to live in a family headed by a single mother. In 1991, 54 percent of Black children lived in a female-headed household, compared with 17 percent of White children (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992). Although these families typically have lower labor market participation rates, they are disproportionately affected by the Family Support Act and new welfare reform efforts to place mothers receiving public assistance in job training programs or paid employment. They are also eligible for part-day intervention programs such as Head Start.

Early Childhood Professionals

Because the field of early education encompasses a large number of persons working in many occupations, the total number of persons in the field is difficult to estimate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1993), in 1992, there were 1.5 million child care workers, including 353,000 private household workers. Of these, the majority (1.2 million) worked in child care centers and in prekindergarten and kindergarten programs. Approximately 800,000 persons worked in the approximately 80,000 center or preschool programs in the United States; 114,000 (18 percent) of these workers are African American (Kisker et al. 1991).

Persons with expertise in early childhood education also work in the federal and state governments, on the staff of resource and referral agencies, and as directors of licensing agencies and organizations. They staff national children's organizations and associations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Head Start Association, the National Family Day Care Association, the Child Care Action Campaign, the Society for Research in Child Development, the Child Welfare League, and the Children's Defense Fund. In addition, they are expert advisors to national associations whose mandates extend beyond children's concerns, including the National Governor's Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Experts in early childhood education also work as faculty and research staff in universities and nonprofit research institutes, in foundations as program officers and as directors of social service agencies and organizations. A substantial proportion of these leaders started their careers or otherwise spent some time as early childhood education providers.

A Historical Sketch of African American Involvement in the Profession

Many consider the founding of Project Head Start in 1965 as the point at which African Americans began entering the field of early childhood education. However, African Americans struggled for generations to provide early education opportunities for their children, usually against incredible odds and often with the threat of

personal harm. Before the Civil War, child care in Black communities took the form of informal field nurseries for slave children (Dill 1973). In subsequent decades, the high levels of labor force participation of African Americans has continued to necessitate out-of-home child care arrangements.

Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) indicate that early Black efforts in both the kindergarten and nursery fields were notable attempts to enrich rather than merely maintain children — in spite of the overt racism of the times. Hampton Institute, a historically Black college established in 1868 to provide industrial education for Blacks, also provided education for five-year-olds at the Butler School located on its property. In 1883, Lucy Laney, a former slave and member of Hampton's first graduating class, opened a nursery and day school for Black children in Augusta, Georgia (Cunningham & Osborn 1979). When the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was established in 1896, it included a kindergarten section headed by Haydee Campbell, a graduate of Oberlin College. Through the NACW, she was instrumental in establishing kindergartens for Black children throughout the United States and Canada (Cunningham & Osborn 1979).

Black land grant colleges, as well as many private institutions, operated laboratory schools for prospective teachers of young children. In addition to Hampton Institute, Howard University and Atlanta University offered academic courses related to early childhood education. Thirteen kindergarten diplomas were awarded to graduating teachers in 1902. Spelman's College Laboratory School opened in 1930 under the direction of Flemmie Kittrell, the first Black early childhood educator to receive a doctorate. She also opened a Laboratory School at Bennett College in 1931, and went to Howard University in 1940 as Director of its Nursery School and Head of Home Economics (Cunningham & Osborn 1979).

From the 1930s through the 1950s, a large number of Black elementary school teachers migrated to the North. In many cases, they were denied certification that would have allowed them to teach in the public schools. Those who were certified often found that positions were already filled (Dill 1973). The only available work setting was the day care center, which subsequently was portrayed as offering many opportunities for Black teachers.

During subsequent years, African Americans continued to be well-represented in early childhood programs. In 1990, some 18 percent of center-based teachers and ten percent of regulated family day care providers were Black (Kisker et al. 1991). However, African Americans are under-represented at the leadership level. Membership lists of several leading early education organizations reveal very little African American representation. For example, less than three percent of the 4,800 members of the Society for Research in Child Development in 1993 are African American (Kuhn 1993). Of the 50 regular members of the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education in 1992-93, only six percent are African American (Mobley 1993). Of over 400 local, state, and regional affiliate leaders of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, fewer than five percent are African American (Smith 1993).

Despite the long history of African Americans in the early childhood education field, they have failed to enter the leadership levels of this profession. What factors have impeded African American career advancement in the early childhood education arena? ■

Barriers to African American Leadership: Survey Data

The field of early education encompasses a variety of persons working in many occupations: direct service providers in private households, child care centers, and prekindergarten programs; resource and referral agency personnel; directors of licensing and social service agencies; employees of children's organizations; advisors to national associations and government bodies; faculty and research staff in universities and nonprofit research institutions; and foundation program officers.

However, the data on early childhood educators are limited and do not adequately encompass this wide range of occupations.

While there is considerable information on staff in early childhood programs, most research has focused on workers in child care centers, and there are no representative data on leaders. Nevertheless, because a substantial proportion of leaders in the field have spent some time as early childhood educators, data on the staff of early childhood education programs shed light on the characteristics of the pool of potential leaders as well as the mode of entry and progression into leadership positions.

The following analysis presents information concerning the background and experiences of early childhood program staff. These findings are based on quantitative data from the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition's 1988 Child Development Associate (CDA) National Survey, the National Child Care Staffing Survey conducted by the Child Care Employee Project in 1988, and A Profile of Child Care Settings undertaken by Mathematica Policy Research for the Department of Education in 1989 and 1990.

On average, a child care center employs five teachers, two to three assistant teachers and aides, and several volunteers who work about ten hours per week. Statistics show that approximately 18 percent of center staff are Black (Kisker et al. 1991). This suggests that, at the entry level at least, there is a large pool from which Black early childhood education leaders could be drawn. Nevertheless, African Americans are failing to advance to the highest levels of the field.

NBCDI's study explored several hypotheses which have been posited to explain this discrepancy (Jaynes and Williams 1989; Alston 1988). These include: (1) less education and training attained by African Americans; (2) limited experience of African Americans; (3) limited mobility for African Americans; and (4) the lack of benefits and monetary compensation in entry-level early childhood positions.

Do African Americans Have Less Education and Training? Yes.

Teachers in child care centers are well-educated relative to the population as a whole. According to A Profile of Child Care Settings[2] (PCS), 90 percent have received special training in child care or early education, and almost half have a college degree (Kisker et al. 1991). In contrast, in 1990, only 19 percent of White females and 12 percent of Black females age 25 and older had completed four or more years of college (U.S. Statistical Abstract 1992).

However, African Americans in early childhood education lack the level and quality of academic preparation received by their White peers (Task Force on Teaching as a Profession 1986). The National Child Care Staffing Survey[3] of child care center staff found that only 14 percent of Black teachers had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 31 percent of White teachers (Whitebook, Howes, and

Percentage of Early Childhood Education Staff Who Were Promoted, by Education and Race

	Teacher to Teacher/Director		Assistant Teacher to Teacher		Aide to Assistant Teacher	
Schooling	**Black**	**White**	**Black**	**White**	**Black**	**White**
High school or less	0	2	19	33	14	14
Some college	3	6	32	41	26	12
College degree	18	2	67	52	33	20
All levels of schooling	5	3	30	41	20	14

Source: Analysis of National Child Care Staffing Study

Phillips 1989). Also, 16 percent of the Black teaching staff surveyed received their education in vocational schools compared to only four percent of Whites. African Americans rely more on certification than academic training: of persons certified as Child Development Associates,[4] 34 percent are African American.

The lower educational attainment of African Americans in early childhood education is consistent with statistics for the broader population: African Americans are less likely to enter college than Whites. In 1986, only 45.6 percent of Black high school graduates entered college, compared to 64.6 percent of Whites (National Center for Education Statistics 1992).

Percentage Distribution of Staff by Education, Race, and Position

	Teacher/ Director		Teacher		Assistant Teacher		Aide	
Educational Attainment	Blacks	White	Blacks	White	Blacks	White	Blacks	White
Less than high school	*	2	6	6	4	7	24	22
High school	*	14	27	22	36	32	39	36
Some college	42	30	42	31	47	42	27	30
Associate	17	14	11	10	7	5	6	7
BA/BS	33	23	12	21	5	12	3	4
Graduate school	8	18	2	10	2	2	1	1
Number of cases	12	44	172	570	68	176	33	106

Source: Analysis of National Child Care Staffing Study. (*) Indicates no cases.

The likelihood of attending college has been declining among Blacks relative to Whites since the mid 1970s (Jaynes and Williams 1989). This may be due to two factors. First, many African American students receive poor academic preparation early in their careers, making it difficult for them to qualify for many post-secondary institutions (Jaynes and Williams 1989). However, achievement levels of Blacks, while below those of Whites, have been rising. A more likely explanation is that it is difficult for many African Americans to obtain the financial resources to attend college, especially a four-year college.

Over the past 20 years, the federal government has placed a greater reliance on borrowing for student aid and has decreased the funds for grants-in-aid (Jaynes and Williams 1989). For many African American students and families, borrowing is not a viable option (Barnes 1992) and other resources are not available within the family to support a college education.

Do African Americans Have Less Professional Experience? No.

A second possible explanation for the under-representation of Blacks in early childhood education leadership is that they lack the years of experience in the field when compared to Whites. An original analysis of data from the National Child Care Staffing Survey does *not* support this hypothesis. In fact, African American teachers, assistant teachers and aides in that study had more experience than their White counterparts. Almost 80 percent of Black teachers had been in the field for at least four years, compared to 65 percent of White teachers. The respective percentages were 60 and 41 percent for Black and White assistant teachers and 55 and 29 percent for Black and White aides.

[2]A Profile of Child Care Settings was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research for the Department of Education in 1989 and 1990. This study provided the first national picture of staff in regulated and unregulated center-based programs, including day care centers, part-day programs such as nursery schools, and Head Start programs. It was based on a national sample of 2,089 program directors in 36 states.

[3]The National Child Care Staffing Study, conducted by the Child Care Employee Project, provided the first picture of the salaries and working conditions of staff in full-day programs in day care centers, based on a sample of 1,305 center-based providers in five sites. The distribution of staff by race in the NCCSS was as follows: 45 teacher directors, 573 teachers, 178 assistant teachers, and 106 aides were White, and 12 teacher directors, 172 teachers, 69 assistant teachers, and 33 aides were African American.

[4]A CDA is an entry-level credential certifying that the recipient has passed basic training and coursework in working with young children.

Is the Upward Mobility of African Americans Limited? Yes.

The fact that African Americans have more experience than Whites in various positions suggests that their mobility is restricted — they have not been able to advance. An examination of National Child Care Staffing Survey data relating to upward mobility revealed that African Americans are able to advance from low-level positions at rates comparable to Whites but are often barred from further advancement. Failure to advance beyond the assistant teacher level seems to be due to lower educational levels among African Americans.

When mobility was compared by race among those with similar educational levels, NBCDI found that African Americans experience substantial mobility at lower levels in the field, particularly from aide to assistant teacher. Among all individuals who entered the field as aides, 20 percent of African Americans were promoted to assistant teachers, compared to 14 percent of their White counterparts. Among aides with some college, 26 percent of African Americans advanced to assistant teacher, compared to 12 percent of White aides.

Although a college degree is not required for teachers in many community-based early childhood programs, a degree was found to be a major asset for advancement from assistant teacher to teacher. Accordingly, 67 percent of African American assistant teachers with a degree and 52 percent of their White peers were able to advance to the teacher position, although the numbers of African Americans with a bachelor's degree was small. However, because African American assistant teachers were less likely than Whites to have a college education, only 30 percent of all African American assistant teachers were able to advance to the teacher position, compared to 41 percent of all White assistant teachers.

A college degree was also critical for advancement from teacher to teacher/director. In fact, among those who started as teachers and had obtained at least a bachelor's degree, African Americans advanced into a teacher/director position at higher rates than Whites — 18 percent versus two percent, respectively. At the level of teacher/director, there is no difference between African Americans and Whites in educational attainment or in years of experience. However, the *number* of African Americans in these positions is small, and the relatively large *percentage* of African Americans advancing to this level may indicate an inability of highly qualified African Americans to enter other positions of leadership.

Are Low Wages and Benefits a Barrier for African Americans? Yes.

In spite of their relatively high levels of education, child care workers earn less than other occupations with lower average educational levels, such as typists and sales workers in retail establishments. In fact, **child care workers are the lowest paid of all occupations tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics**. In 1990, the average hourly wage for early childhood education teachers was $7.49. This comes to a weekly income of $262, and an annual income of $13,100 for full-time workers.

The field of early childhood education also provides poor benefits. The most common benefits received by early childhood professionals are paid sick leave (75 percent of respondents), paid vacation time (64 percent), and/or educational stipends (77 percent) (Kisker et al. 1991). However, fewer than half receive reduced rates for their own children, pension benefits, life insurance, health insurance, or paid maternity leave. National Child Care Staffing Study data reveal that 42 percent of full-time child care staff receive fully or

Percentage Distribution of Staff by Years of Experience, Race, and Position

	Teacher/ Director		Teacher		Assistant Teacher		Aide	
Years of Experience	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Less than 1 year	0	2	5	9	12	20	24	27
1-3 years	0	11	17	26	28	39	21	44
4-5 years	17	13	20	19	22	14	21	12
More than 5 years	83	74	58	46	38	27	34	17
Total (n=)	12	45	172	572	68	176	33	106

Source: Analysis of National Child Care Staffing Study

partially paid health insurance, compared to 54 percent of the nation's wage and salary workers. Thirty-three percent of all full-time staff receive a cost of living adjustment, and only 30 percent of all full-time staff receive life insurance (Whitebook, Howes and Phillips 1989). In contrast, nationwide and across professions, 69 percent of full-time employees in small private establishments participated in employer-provided health care plans; 88 percent received paid vacations; and 64 percent had life insurance in 1990 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1991).

Low salaries and benefits are responsible, in part, for high turnover among early education teachers of all races. The Profile of Child Care Settings (Kisker et al. 1991) found that teacher turnover averages 25 percent, with high turnover associated with low level of salaries. According to the National Child Care Staffing Study, turnover among teachers and assistant teachers averages 41 percent.

Although wages and benefits are equally low for Blacks and Whites in the field of early childhood education, when education and length of time are held constant, the low level of wages may be a particularly important barrier for African Americans who are considering entering or making a career in the field. In 1988, the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition obtained information from 4,081 individuals who had received a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential between 1983 and 1988. Respondents who were no longer working in early education were asked why they had left the field.[5] While they overwhelmingly identified lack of benefits and low salaries as a major cause of dropping out, there were some differences between Blacks and Whites. All of the African Americans, compared to 84 percent of Whites, cited low salaries, and 61 percent of Blacks versus 48 percent of Whites cited lack of benefits. In contrast, more than one third of the Whites cited family changes, compared with 17 percent of Blacks.

These findings lend credibility to the hypothesis that African Americans may experience more difficulties surviving on low wages and poor benefits. **Because a higher proportion of Blacks than Whites are single mothers supporting their own children and contributing to the support of parents and other family members, African Americans may not be as able as Whites to tolerate low benefits and salaries.** Thus, wages and benefits may be more critical factors for Blacks in deciding whether to stay in the field.

Conclusion

Survey data indicate that African Americans are under-represented as leaders in the early education field primarily due to their lower level of education and training as well as discouragement by the low salaries and lack of benefits offered by this field. A lack of financial resources may be a major barrier to accepting employment within the early childhood education profession as well as accessing opportunities for higher education which would facilitate advancement within the field.

African Americans have more work experience than their White counterparts and experience substantial mobility at the level of aide. The lower educational attainment of many African Americans presents an obstacle to mobility at the assistant teacher level. For Blacks with a college degree, however, mobility is equal to that of their White colleagues.

Inequality of wages by race does not appear to be an issue for African Americans in center-based early education programs. However, the low wages earned by early childhood educators of all races may present a particular hardship for African American women who are often financially responsible for family members without the second income of a husband. ■

[5] A sample of 11,000 individuals who had received their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential between 1983 and 1988 were mailed a questionnaire asking about their education, experience, and training before and after receiving the CDA. Half of the 4,081 respondents were White, one-third were Black, and 12 percent were of other racial/ethnic groups. The response rate to the survey was only 33 percent. Thus, this survey does not provide a good estimate of the rate of leaving the field. It could be expected that those who did not answer the survey consist disproportionately of those who are no longer in early childhood education. Reasons for leaving come from the responses of 115 Whites and 41 Blacks.

Gateways to Leadership: Interview Findings

African Americans who attain a college degree have virtually the same opportunities to advance from assistant teacher to teacher to teacher/director in a center-based early childhood education program as their White counterparts. Yet few African Americans advance further. What characteristics and experiences are common to African Americans who are able to become leaders in early childhood education?

Numerous publications discuss the "universal" characteristics of leaders (NBCDI 1993; Beatty and Lee 1992; Bositis 1993; Jones 1986; Jaynes and Williams 1989; Smith 1982). These traits can be grouped under the following three headings:

- ***Skills and Training***. Successful leaders have a strong educational background and keep abreast of new information in their field. In addition, they recognize problems, develop solutions, and implement them (NBCDI 1993; Beatty and Lee 1992). Most successful leaders also go through some type of apprenticeship in their field (Bositis 1993) and exhibit strong organizational skills (NBCDI 1993).

- ***Attitudes and Outlook***. Successful leaders are forward thinking. They see and act independently, but with their constituents' values and motivations in mind (Beatty and Lee 1992). Successful leaders are self-motivated and exhibit a high level of initiative and a willingness to take calculated risks. Leaders identify the mission and direction of their organization and help to achieve its objectives (Beatty and Lee 1992).

- ***Relationships and Interactions with Others***. Successful leaders understand the importance of social and political structures in their organizations (Jones 1986; Beatty and Lee 1992; Jaynes and Williams 1989; NBCDI 1993). They have strong listening and interpersonal skills, are good negotiators, and have extensive networks. Leaders interact well with both supervisors and subordinates and receive support from both. Successful leaders are visible in their field through participation in professional groups and organizations, and they are accepted by others as leaders.

African American leaders must possess additional attributes to be effective in this society. It is particularly important for African Americans to interact effectively with decision makers of other races because many Black leaders and organizations need support and assistance to achieve their objectives (Jaynes and Williams 1989). However, recognition and acceptance of African American abilities may be hampered by the prejudices of their colleagues. Literature on Black managers suggests that many African Americans are unwilling to express feelings or ideas concerning racial issues to their colleagues (Jones 1986; Smith 1982).

Type of Organization for Which Interviewed Leaders Work (Number)	
Private, not for profit	12
Private, for profit	1
Federal, state, or local government	5
College or university	7

To ascertain how some African Americans meet these challenges and rise to the upper echelons of the early childhood education field, NBCDI interviewed 25 African American early childhood leaders representing all four regions of the country and including 22 women and three men. Their occupations are as follows: four heads of national organizations; four associate professors (one recently retired); three state specialists; three foundation executives; two assistant professors; two college administrators; one public school administrator; one Head Start program specialist; one university-based program coordinator; one head of a county organization; one retired educational consultant; one retired early childhood/administrative management specialist; and one head of a resource and referral agency. Ten had attended historically Black colleges. Twenty-three had completed at least a master's degree.

Over half of the respondents became interested in the field of early childhood education through a work experience. Eighteen respondents worked in a preschool, pre-primary, or kindergarten program at the beginning of their careers. Twenty-two had that experience either during or after college. Twenty-four respondents have been in the field for at least 15 years.

Although no two respondents followed the same path to leadership, several key factors affecting their career paths were mentioned by almost every respondent: family, education, mentors and self-promotion, and professional networks.

Educational Background of Interviewed Leaders (Number)	
Highest Degree Earned	
Bachelor's degree	3
Master's degree	9
Doctorate without dissertation	2
Doctoral degree	10
Doctor of Medicine	1
Field of Concentration*	
Early childhood education	9
Child/human development	3
Early learning	1
Psychology	2
Education	5
Management	2
Other	2
*Responses do not total 25, because one interviewee did not respond	

How is the Development of African American Leaders Influenced by their Families?

Family plays a pivotal role for emerging leaders. **Over 60 percent of respondents said that their families were supportive of their decision to pursue their education regardless of the field**. According to one leader, "My upbringing is the single most important reason for my success. My parents instilled in me a strong sense of self which allowed me not to be intimidated or in awe of others." Another said that she was exposed to leadership at an early age because of her father's active involvement in a civil rights organization. She was told by her family, "Whatever you do, do it well, make it right, and you will make it to the top."

All of the married female respondents credited their husbands with helping them to achieve leadership roles. Many of the married respondents had children and needed the financial and moral support of their husbands to continue school or to return to work.

How Does Post-Graduate Work Prepare African Americans for Leadership?

Almost all respondents acknowledged the important role education played in helping them attain leadership positions in the field. Education "provides you with a knowledge base," "helps you to gain the respect of the people with whom you are working" and "helps to gain access and exposure to practitioners and others in the field." Ten percent responded that as an African American, a post-graduate degree was important for proving their qualifications. Respondents felt that acceptance in the field, especially for African Americans, was based more on academic credentials than on experience.

Almost 65 percent of respondents credited their graduate school experience with at least indirectly preparing them for leadership positions. One respondent stated that "an advanced degree exposes you to the best thinkers in the field and provides you with leadership skills to help people think, to influence people and to be a change agent." However, at least half of the respondents felt that the courses, field experiences and activities required to obtain the degree were not particularly beneficial as *practical* preparation for leadership in the field. Many programs did not offer specific courses or activities related to leadership.

Support received on campus from faculty and administrators was perceived as different for Blacks and Whites. Although almost 70 percent of respondents felt that their school administrators and faculty were supportive and helpful while they were in school, 60 percent felt that Blacks did not receive the same amount and type of support on campus as Whites. These respondents stated that White faculty members did not know how to support African Americans.

Respondents who attended predominantly White undergraduate colleges believed that such environments were generally less supportive and less encouraging for African Americans than historically Black colleges. One respondent stated that her undergraduate advisor "did not encourage me, did not make me believe that I could succeed in the field that I had chosen." Others felt that they had to do a lot more to get the attention and recognition they deserved. Such comments were made less often regarding experiences at predominantly White *graduate* schools. Respondents who were married

Ways in Which Interviewed Leaders Are Active in the Profession* (Number)		
	Yes	**No**
Mentored a younger African American colleague in the field?	24	1
Served as a panelist or moderator at conferences for organizations such as NBCDI or the National Association for the Education of Young Children?	25	0
Published articles in early childhood periodicals?	13	12
Interviewed by the media about early childhood education issues?	23	2
Served on advisory committees and/or boards related to early childhood education?	25	0
Served on a commission or national panel created by the federal, state or local government and/or a foundation?	19	5
Served as a consultant to state or federal agency, corporation, or foundation regarding the field of early childhood education?	20	5
Served on the faculty of a major college or university?	19	6
Worked as a foundation program officer?	3	18
Worked as a researcher in the field?	11	14
*Responses to some questions do not total 25, because some interviewees did not respond.		

while in graduate school felt that they did not need or look for support and interaction from faculty.

Several respondents suggested how campus environments could be made more comfortable for African Americans. These suggestions included having faculty, advisors, and counselors that reflect the racial composition of the students on campus and having more structured activities to bring students of all ethnicities together.

A frequently suggested strategy for increasing the representation of African Americans in the field was to increase the availability of financial assistance. Respondents remarked that it is more difficult for African Americans to obtain post-graduate degrees because of a lack of economic support.

Two mentioned that they did not complete a Ph.D. program, because they did not have the necessary financial resources. "We need more dollars for training to move into positions necessary to advance."

How Do Mentors and Self-Promotion Expedite Advancement?

The two most frequently mentioned ways of gaining access to the leadership ladder in early childhood education were mentors and self-promotion. Respondents felt that having someone to help them learn how to work within the system was important. Eighty-four percent of respondents had at least one mentor when they entered the field. Several stated that they had a mentor "but did not realize it at the time." Another said, "I had mentors at every level. They took personal interest in me and gave me a lot of guidance." One respondent said that she "had to learn the hard way, by trial and error, how to access positions in the field because [she] did not have a mentor." Another respondent noted that he would have been a less effective leader without the help of his mentor.

Three-quarters of respondents were mentored by professors or supervisors. African Americans and Whites both served as effective mentors to respondents.

"Mentors are extremely important in professional development and advancement, and my mentors have been both Black and White. The mentoring relationship is based on reciprocity and trust. Once these are established, the relationship can transcend racial differences."

Over half of respondents said that their mentor provided support and encouragement, which helped build self-confidence. Mentors also helped to expose respondents to opportunities that led to leadership positions. Twenty percent of respondents became involved in professional organizations due to pressure from their mentors. A few respondents published articles with assistance from mentors. These activities helped them obtain the necessary exposure to be considered for leadership positions. Respondents mentioned being nominated for boards or selected for jobs based on recommendations from their mentors.

Over 60 percent of respondents said that they gained access to leadership positions through self-promotion, drive, and persistence. Respondents had a strong belief in themselves and their abilities and were not easily discouraged by difficulties. One noted, "It takes a certain amount of chutzpa to walk into meetings and be the only Black person. You must be willing to accept the discomfort of stepping into an unfamiliar arena. When it is uncomfortable, keep your eyes on the larger picture and the broader perspective: there must be more African American representation in the field."

Do Professional Organizations and Networks Support African Americans?

Almost 70 percent of respondents had been involved in professional organizations for at least 15 years, and every respondent participated in at least two professional organizations. Organizations serve as ladders to leadership positions and national recognition. Professional organizations offer "opportunities to meet other people and share ideas, to become better known across the U.S. and familiar with ideas before they become mainstream ideas." Over 60 percent of the respondents had gained access to professional networks through involvement in these organizations.

Access to key informal networks beyond those provided through professional organizations is important to attain leadership in the field. Nine out of ten respondents felt that several such networks existed.

Ways in Which Interviewed Leaders Influence the Field (Number)	
Affect national or state policies	7
Affect teacher development and/or training	7
Affect curriculum development	2
Consult with private sector or government (including private sector)	2
Other	7

Although these networks are ethnically diverse, membership is predominantly White on the highest levels.

While half of all respondents did not feel that their access to key informal networks was limited, they did feel that the access of most other African Americans was limited. And despite their own access, the majority of respondents felt that they were not really included in the informal groups but remained on the periphery. One respondent made the following observation: "There's a network, and then there's a network. The smaller networks don't include Blacks. We are not entrenched in the power environment."

Racism remains a problem in the field of early childhood education. Over 90 percent of respondents reported that they encountered racism in the field; 64 percent felt they are sometimes treated as token leaders. Although few respondents noted instances of blatant racism, subtle forms of racism were prevalent. For example, 15 percent of respondents stated that at meetings, their comments are often ignored, and that African Americans are rarely selected to speak at meetings of national organizations. Others mentioned that only a few African Americans are ever asked to be involved in national activities and events.

Respondents noted that the racism they experience is not unique to the early childhood education profession, and that until racism is eradicated from the fabric of American society, racism will continue to exist in this field. In the words of one African American leader, "[I have a] sense of unexpressed outrage upon the realization that despite credentials and experience, there is a glass ceiling that you will never be able to penetrate because of race."

Conclusion

Although almost all respondents mentioned family, education, mentors and self-promotion, and professional networks as important to career advancement, only one-fourth of the respondents believed that there was a clearly defined path into a leadership position. Stated one respondent, "One route is more formal and takes place in an academic setting. It involves studying with famous people and working one's way up the hierarchy at a university or research institution. The second path is to work and be a leader at the local level."

Ways in Which Interviewed Leaders are Involved in Professional Organizations* (Number)

	Primary Activity	Secondary Activity
Attend meetings and conferences	9	6
Serve on advisory committees	3	8
Serve on boards	10	5
Publish in their journals	1	2
Moderate/speak at meetings	1	0
Other	1	1

*Secondary activities do not total 25, because some interviewees did not respond.

Almost 75 percent said that the path was different for Blacks than it was for Whites. Three-quarters of those who responded that the path was different for Blacks and Whites said that it was more difficult for Blacks than for Whites to follow the path. African Americans face more difficulties with the formal route because of financial constraints, institutional racism, lack of mentors, and a lack of opportunities to publish and co-author papers.

Almost half of those who believe that the paths differed for Whites and Blacks felt that Whites do not need the formal route as much to gain national recognition because they have more access to high-visibility positions due to social networks. Several commented that Whites had access to people and institutions inaccessible to African Americans. "There is a leadership ladder; it's not clearly defined, but it is there -- an invisible ladder."■

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to document African American representation in leadership positions in early childhood education, to examine why Blacks are under-represented in leadership positions, and to suggest strategies to increase their participation as leaders in the field. To do so, NBCDI reviewed the research literature, analyzed existing survey data, and interviewed 25 African American leaders in the field.

Three-quarters of the African American leaders interviewed entered the field through classroom experience working with young children. Consequently, NBCDI closely examined the pool of potential leaders currently working in such programs, of whom some 18 percent are African American.

The Institute examined four hypotheses that might explain why African Americans are under-represented as leaders in the early education field: less education and training; less experience; limited occupational mobility; and low pay and lack of benefits in the field.

NBCDI found that African Americans do have less education and training than Whites, and that this partially explains differences in positions and pay. In contrast, NBCDI also found that African Americans have more work experience than their White counterparts. Furthermore, African Americans experience substantial mobility at lower levels in the field, at the level of aide. However, they encounter obstacles to mobility early. At the assistant teacher level, African Americans have less mobility than Whites, because fewer African Americans have a college degree.

Formal academic training is critical to advancement at the early stages of career development. Unfortunately, African Americans have fewer opportunities for higher education due to limited family resources and a lack of financial assistance. Consequently, their opportunities for advancement within the early childhood education profession are severely constrained.

Inequality of wages by race does not appear to be an issue for African Americans in center-based early education programs. There was no difference in the wages of African Americans and Whites when education and length of time in the field were held constant.

However, we found evidence that the low level of wages may be a particularly important barrier for African Americans who are considering entering or making a career in the field. Given the high proportion of African American women supporting children, parents, and other family members, this group may not be as able as Whites to tolerate low salaries and benefits in return for a rewarding career with leadership possibilities. African Americans were more likely than Whites to cite low pay and poor benefits as a reason for leaving the field.

NBCDI interviewed 25 African American leaders in the field of early childhood education to investigate what happens to African Americans who wish to advance beyond the position of teacher/director. Several key factors affecting their career development were mentioned by almost every respondent: family, education, mentors, self-promotion and professional networks. Families, in particular, play a pivotal role in developing leadership motivation and capacity by supporting respondents' decision to pursue their education. Having a post-graduate degree was another critical factor. However, several respondents mentioned lack of financial support as limiting their educational attainment.

In addition, the two most frequently cited ways of gaining access to the leadership ladder in early childhood education were mentors and professional networks. Most respondents had at least one mentor when they entered the field. All participated in at least two professional organizations for at least 15 years, and access to informal professional networks was considered important to attaining leadership in the field. Most of the respondents also mentioned the importance of self-promotion, drive, and persistence.

In spite of the success experienced by respondents, almost all experienced subtle forms of racism in the field, and felt that "despite credentials and experience, there is a glass ceiling that [an African American] will never be able to penetrate because of race."

Recommendations

Based upon these findings, NBCDI presents the following recommendations to help eradicate the barriers to the advancement of African Americans to positions of leadership in early childhood education:

Recommendation 1: Collect additional data on all leaders in early childhood education.

Implementation: Diverse organizations — such as NBCDI and Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American nonprofits — should collaborate with a research entity such as the Urban Institute or an institution

of higher education to collect additional data. Future research efforts should include an investigation of the role of actual and perceived racism in discouraging ambition and otherwise preventing advancement among early childhood personnel of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Recommendation 2: Increase educational opportunities for personnel already in the field.

Implementation: This effort should begin with identifying targets of opportunity to impact training systems. For example, the Clinton Administration's proposed expansion of the Head Start program presents an opportunity to ensure that Head Start personnel have access to a career ladder which will enable them to emerge as leaders. Simultaneously, initiatives must be undertaken to ensure that community-based child care programs have funds and training programs available to enable their staffs to advance. Given the low wages in the field, increasing financial assistance for higher education should be central to this effort.

Recommendation 3: Establish a consortium of teacher training institutions that specialize in early childhood education to better coordinate existing efforts and develop new strategies for diversifying the field at the leadership level.

Implementation: The consortium could assist in recruiting ethnically diverse educators to prepare for leadership in the early childhood field, tapping the Head Start and child care communities. Fellowship programs could be established to help individuals already in the field gain exposure to and experience in the policy arena. Nonprofit organizations, foundations, governmental entities, and other institutions would provide ideal settings and would also facilitate the development of mentor-protege relationships. The consortium could also develop a process to expedite the hiring and promotion of professionals in the field who are ready to assume leadership roles.

As stated by one African American leader interviewed for this study, "The field must be concerned with what is best for children and families. It must be able to attract and generate people who can do the best and be the best for children. The field must reflect the faces of the children and their families." ■

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